

Informant:	LMP-S9	Spanish
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CH: First of all, I want to ask you where you were born?

S9: In Mexico.

CH: Did you live there for a long time?

S9: I lived there until I was seventeen years old.

CH: And how old are you now?

S9: twenty-four.

Woman's Voice: Hello, what's up?

S9: Julio will tell you which ones

Woman's Voice: OK

CH: I wanted to ask you, How long have you been working in botanicas or with natural medicine?

S9: In botanicas I've been for a little period of time, in relation with the this whole thing

CH: What has attracted you to work in the Botanica?

S9: I've always been interested by this, I am a very curious person and this has always caught my attention. I've always been interested with zodiac signs. I always asked my friends what signs they were so that I could know about them and stuff. And, Until I met him, which was not long ago, was when I, well I guess I needed some one to orient me. I am very happy. I like it a lot.

CH: You met him while you visited this Botanica?

S9: No, I met him near my house and we together we set up the Botanica.

CH: So this Botanica belongs to both of you.

S9: Yes.

CH: I thought it belonged to a Salvadorian lady.

S9: Well she is my partner/couple, so it's the same thing.

CH: So you are studying with the man, Julio?

S9: Yes, he is who is teaching me and guiding me with everything I do. But really, it's not that you have to study, you have to have this inside. It's like if you wanted to study singing, you are not born singing well. But if you have the desire to develop your talent no one has to teach or tell you how to do it because it's going to come within you and you are going to do it how you think it's best. One is oneself's teacher.

CH: So it's like...

S9: He has guided me but not taught me because I am doing my own things and I am learning from myself.

CH: He is only like a guide?

S9: Yes. He does most of the jobs and I help him. He reads the cards and does *limpias* (cleansing). I sometimes help him with the *limpias*. I sometimes do the jobs but the majority of them he does.

CH: How long have you had this Botanica?

S9: Three months now.

CH: a short time. Is it going well so far?

S9: Yes, it's improving since we started it.

CH: How much do you use natural plants?

S9: Only the ones we have there. We don't use those as much. We do *limpias* and other jobs.

CH: What type of herbs do you use for the *limpias*?

S9: The (pirul), rosemary (romero), rue (ruda), egg (huevo).

CH: How do you use the egg?

S9: The egg is used for the *limpia*. You cleanse the person with the egg (huevo).

CH: How?

S9: The person has to bring the egg or we could buy an egg and with that we do the *limpia* (cleanse). It's like the cards; the egg can be read like the cards, you read the egg. Or you take away the bad things with the egg (huevo).

CH: Um-huh

S9: The salt (note: salt is sometimes used as ‘bad luck’) because anywhere people give you the salt, brothers, neighbors the family. They go to the house and they give you the salt. You have to be cleaning yourself because there is too much envy. There too many people who don’t want you to live happy, the neighbors. We have to fight against all that and if we don’t clean ourselves no one is going to do it for us.

CH: Are the limpias something that you have to do on a regular basis or one when you feel that you need it?

S9: It depends on the person. If the person feels bad then they have to do it. It also depends if the person believes in that, if the person is confident that it will work. I have always said that if you believe in a Saint and you believe and you have faith, it will work. It can be any saint, La Virgen de Guadalupe, Judas Tadeo, I don’t criticize any one. Every one believes in what is convenient to them and in what they want to believe. If they have faith in what they do, then things will turn out well.

CH: Yes, that’s very true, I spoke with a man before who is a curandero, and he told me that when he teaches a person to work, since he works spiritually as well as with natural herbs for curing and many different things done in botanica, he told me he gives a limpia to the person. First he gives them something bitter to clean his insides and make him strong and then he gives them sweets to make his soul the best, good. Have you had to be initiated or have to clean yourself before starting?

S9: Yes, I had to go through something in order to start helping him and working. The thing is that we do not work with saints. We are not santeros, we don’t work with the Virgin of Guadalupe, San Martin Cavallero or San Judas Tadeo, or Santa Marta, no one. We only work with the ‘holy death’ (santicima muerte). Only her, no one else. You see the candles here used for saints but that only because the clients want candles but not because we work with the candles on saints. We only do jobs with the saint death (santiciam muerte) and those are black jobs (trabajos negros), we don’t work with anyone else.

CH: Are jobs with the santicima muerte (Holy Death) related to love?

S9: They could be good or bad. It depends.

CH: But they could be of love? They are about love?

S9: Everything. Whatever.

CH: I have always been told that work with the Santicima Muerte (Holy Death) is more for love, whether they are good or bad.

S9: With anything not just love, work too, with family. It depends on what the customer wants, and if we can do it we do it.

CH: What are the types of work that the customers usually want?

S9: Regularly the husbands return, because he left, the women become distant, or when some one likes some one else. Some times they want to keep the husbands lover away.

CH: Things with jobs and business,

S9: Yes so that they have good business, so that they get a job, so that money last longer in jobs, to weed out neighbors envy, all that.

CH: Do you make limpias at customers' homes?

S9: Yes. We also go to businesses. We give them limpias and set candles for them. We go to houses and give them limpias.

CH: When you go to businesses, how do you do limpias? Is there a process?

S9: Yes, it depends because there are different ways to clean a business. We need to take (pirul), incense (incensio), charcoal (carbon) to burn, waters (aguas), candles (velas), and say a lot of prayers (rezos). Many things.

CH: The material that is going to be used all depends on the situation?

S9: Yes, you can also clean it with ice (hielo).

CH: With ice (hielo)?

S9: Yes, you can clean houses with ice.

CH: I had never heard of the use of ice.

S9: You put the ice in a tray and recite the "O Father..." then the ice needs to be thrown to each corner of the house and that cleans the house.

CH: And you let it melt there?

S9: Yes, you let it melt. You only need to throw 3 or 4 cubes in each corner? If there are 20, then in all 20 corners.

CH: And when you take the incense (incensio), does it have to be some thing you pass around the whole house?

S9: Yes. We have a small silver or copper tray where we put a charcoal (carbon), light it and then put the incense (incensio) on top. That is for cleaning. You pray, and ask for a prosperous business and you light the candles.

CH: Coming back to the egg (huevo), I remember that when I was little a lady cured and she did some thing to me with the egg.

S9: When they give you the evil eye (hicieron ojo), for example they bring a baby and he has indigestion (empacho) then the mom say they gave him the eye when he was on the

street maybe some woman liked him but she didn't touch him, so now he is sick. Now we have to clean him with egg (huevo). We pray the "O Father..." and you do some...you speak and everything comes out in the egg.

CH: When you break it right?

S9: (note: No Audible Response Given)

CH: Does this Botanica work with other botanicas?

S9: No. We work alone.

CH: And you've been here three months?

S9: (note: No Audible Response Given)

CH: What types of people come here, blacks, Asians, whites?

S9: Mostly all Hispanics, Latinos?

CH: Last time you said that other people came here too.

S9: Yes but they usually come to buy candles, to have the cards read but when it comes to jobs it's mostly Latinos.

CH: I've spoken to other people who are afraid to speak with blacks, whites or other races because since they don't know our culture, they are scared because if they interpret something wrong they might call the police. Do you have a preference?

S9: No. We know what we are doing and we feel secure that's why we are doing this. If we were playing with people, every one would be against us. When we first opened the botanica we started from the bottom with one customer maybe no one in a whole day and now we've been here since last Tuesday at six in the morning until 11 at night without rest, we didn't even eat. People come back because what we do we do it from the heart, we do not do it for the money. When we work with the Holy Death (Santa muerte), we know that to work with her we have to work from the heart and not only so that she will give us money because she can turn things against us and we will have bad things happen to us.

CH: She does not mind if you work with the white or the black (good and evil, respectively)?

S9: no, no

CH: There are people who do not work with the dark because they are afraid of the dark.

S9: When people come we specify the how we work. I always tell people how we work, who we work with and what types of work we do. If they like it and it's convenient for them, good, if not, we cannot force anyone. We let them know that we work through the

Holy Death (Santa muerte) and that every first day of the month we do a prayer for her at night where all the clients need to come pray, they are not forced, it's for who ever wants to come but it's better for them if they do come because things will go better for them. People come. Just because we work for the Holy Death (Santa muerte) and the fact that they come for a job does not mean that they are going to relate with her. We are like the mediators between her and the clients. They cannot work with the Santa muerte, they have to go through a series of stuff in order to work with her. Therefore the client has nothing to do with the Holy Death (Santa muerte).

CH: There are always mediators, here on earth as well as in the heavens. That's something that all religions have.

S9: Yes, I respect all people and I don't look for trouble anywhere. Him and I are the same, like two drops of water. We are Cosmic Twins, we were born the same day, the same month, different year of course but have the same sign. We get along perfectly. We coincide in everything we do. We eat the same foods, we dress the same and we think the same. We are very happy working together. Everything is going well. We give a 21-day warranty for things to work out because we know that things are going to go well for clients. We know because we are working with the Holy Death (Santa Muerte) and we are not afraid that people are going to come in mad at us because things are done well. People also have to put an effort on their behalf, we cannot do everything. They need to come in and clean themselves, do prayers, see their jobs and have cleanings done to them to take away the salt (sal). They need to be clean so that the work we do on them is effective. We work different than others. When someone comes in first we do cleaning of Tres Martes, so that we can start to work on them. First they need to be cleaned because when some one comes in salada (salt), they work is not going to be effective. We read the cards and we see how what the problem is then we know where to start.

CH: A typical consultation...when a person comes and they tell you what is happening, from there you know what's going on?

S9: We tell them what we can do, what we think is going to happen and from there they can decide if they want the job done. We tell the truth, we tell them if some thing is going to have good results or not. We do not lie to the people by telling them that some thing is going to work out, you tell the person the truth. We wont take their money, we are not going to steal because later we will be punished. Some people come in here wanting a limpia, they look down because they've been fired and have no money, I don't have the heart to tell them to leave that I wont do it for them, because I know it will be worse for them. I do the limpia and I tell them to go with the God and that Holy Death (Santicima Muerte) help them. Two weeks later they come, she rewards me, and they leave me 50 dollars. Aside from being good for business you feel good inside

CH: So regularly you don't charge for the limpieas or do you?

S9: Of course we charge, I'm referring to special cases. We do charge people. I'm not saying that everyone is going to come in and we are not going to charge them because them what do we do, how are we going to live. People don't have to pay the full amount on the first visit. We know that not everyone has the money right away, we know how it

is. They can pay part of it one week and some more the next week because a job that we do on them is not going to give results in three days. They have to do the candle process and they have to do the jobs (trabajos) in order for them to function. We are not God to give results tomorrow.

CH: Do you have a different religion from what you practice here?

S9: I only believe in God and the Santisima Muerte. In God because he created everything and in the Santisima Muerte because she is the one who takes us away.

CH: Who is the Santisima Muerte?

S9: She is the queen, the goddess of eternity and the one who decides when we are going to die and take us away. She had a soul that was put here to never die and live forever. In a way it's sad because sometimes there is a point when we get bored of being in this world and we want to rest in peace. But I am very happy with what I am doing. I feel very happy, she has helped me a lot. She has helped me in my job because I have another job.

CH: You work in another botanica?

S9: No, I work as a transvestite. I've been working like that for many years. She has helped me a lot because in that type of work there is envy because people want my position and my job. They make up things and they do things against me to get me fired. Thank God and the Santisima Muerte nothing like that has happened and things go well for me and I am very happy. I have problems like every person because we are all human. I am not going to lie and say that just because I work with the Santisima Muerte I won the lottery or that I have treasures. I have progressed in my work and as a person. I feel happy, at my 24 years of age. I do not depend on any one. I've been independent since I was 14 years old and I feel very secure in what I do and I know that I am not going to regret any thing that I am doing. We are people with a good heart and we wish we could help the whole world, us aquarians are like that.

CH: I'm an Aquarian too.

S9: Really what day?

CH: 27th of January

S9: I'm the 29th...Aquarians, we believe a lot in this, I don't know if you do?

CH: Me, because I do this job.

S9: We are liberal and independent people. We are very...we like going to parties, we could go all week in the disco and we would not sleep and like to help people to the point where we could go without food in order to help someone else. We want to help everyone, we see the children and we wish we had money to help them. I have three children in the program of World Vision (note: a program where you send money to a child overseas) we've had them for four years and every month we send them money. We love to have a

lot of clothes, if it were for us I'd have twenty watches and one day I would wear one and another day some other watch. I don't like to show it off to anyone but I feel happy knowing that I have a small box full of watches and necklaces. We are very creative. I am going to show you all that we have done with our own hands. We have done plates and painted them. We decorated the Altar of the Santisima Muerte with whatever we have. We don't decorate it with gold because we don't have any but it looks very beautiful. We decorate it with plants and everything we decorate it with we do it with our hearts. People like coming here because they feel more alive and happy due to how our botanica is arranged. They go to other botanicas and they are like a cave and ugly inside, not here.

CH: What type of things does the Santisima Muerte like?

S9: We give her water, liquor, we pray, give her flowers, we clean her and we fix every thing up.

CH: Does she have a favorite flower or color?

S9: No, I don't know. I always like to give her roses. No one is going to assure me that she likes certain flowers because I'll ask them, "who told you?" If I feel like decorating with roses today and tomorrow with Margaritas then I'll do it. I feel happy when she looks pretty no matter what types of flowers she is wearing. I do what I feel, depending on the mood I'm in I'll do it.

CH: When you were young did you have feelings that you knew that something was going to happen? Maybe you had an anxiety that told you that you had to work helping people with your spirituality?

S9: No. I always dreamed to be an artist. In the artist world there are a lot of aquarions, I don't know why. I know how to sew and how to do professional make-up. I can do make-up for quincianeras. From that I can make a lot of money but it does not grow in me to work doing that. I like to work here in the botanica. I can spend 24 hours here or a whole month and I don't get bored. At nights sometimes we don't want to leave. We spend about 15 hours here a day.

CH: Really, what time do you open?

S9: We open around 7 or 8am. We are very responsible.

CH: Do you have clients at that time of day?

S9: Yes, some times they call us that they are going to work at 8am and they want to know if they could come at 6:30am and we tell them that of course they can. We've been here from 6am to 11pm, it doesn't matter.

CH: The hours vary then?

S9: Yes, sometimes we are sitting here and I tell Julio “I don’t want to leave” and neither does he. We don’t want to but we have to go sleep. We leave and then we just clean the apartment.

CH: Then you two are the only owners?

S9: My partner too, but we are the ones who work the botanica.